

CHAPTER VI

BOGUS FRIENDS OF GANDHI

*"It is untrue to say today that the British are in the way of communal agreement".*

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*"To talk of slavery in India is merely playing with words...The Viceroy never exercises his veto even now."*—HENRY POLAK'S BROADCAST IN U. S. A.

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*"The demand that India should be given full independence here and now is incompatible with victory."*—LORD RUSSELL IN A LETTER TO "THE NATION".

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"God save me from my friends, I can take care of my enemy," would be Gandhiji's natural reaction when he reads about the activities of his treacherous British friends who while calling Gandhi "a defeatist helping India's enslavement", still pretend to be his friends. Mr. Henry Polak, Lord Bertrand Russell and Sir Norman Angell are but three specimens.

Of all the supporters of India and "Friends of Gandhi", Mr. Henry Polak who lived for years with Gandhiji in South Africa, has proved

himself to be an unfaithful friend to the Mahatma, who loved him so much. Polak, it is an open secret, was engaged by the British Publicity Department and despatched to the United States to bite Gandhi, his "old friend" in the back so that Americans might believe that Gandhi must, indeed, be so unreliable since he was being condemned by an old friend.

Polak's speeches were being arranged under the auspices of the British Information Office in Washington, D. C. and were broadcast at their expense.

#### "GANDHI'S UNWISE LEADERSHIP"

In a speech broadcast from six radio stations Polak said that he had been seeking to hasten India's freedom all his life, but it was not for others to give freedom. "It is for India to earn and take it." Continuing he said he was disappointed with Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders who "claimed" to represent the country but did not follow Tilak's policy.

He told his American audiences, "To talk of slavery in India is merely to play with words. India enjoys 75 per cent freedom according to Edgar Snow. I should myself put it higher and add that the reason she does not at this moment enjoy virtually the whole is because of unwise leadership and missed opportunities."

VOLUNTEER ARMY *versus* CONGRESS

He went on to say "India's volunteer army is as large as the actual membership of the Congress Party."

Explaining why India had not achieved freedom so far, Polak said, "One of the first practical difficulties in the way of India's immediate freedom is the presence at the very head and heart of the Congress Party of a powerful defeatist and pacifist element headed by Gandhi." He put these words into the mouth of Pandit Nehru.

He continued, "I am not suggesting that Congress leaders are pro-Japanese. But so long as that defeatist element in the party leadership remains, it will be impossible for other parties of nationalists to collaborate with the Congress Party". (This is Lord Wavell speaking.)

TESTIMONIAL TO BRITAIN

He then gave the following testimonial to the British on the subject of communal troubles in India: "It is untrue to say today—whatever may have been the case in the past—that the British are in the way of communal agreement."

Then he assumed Amery's role and announced, "The present situation cannot be changed during the war, since to do so would raise the very

problems, which should be held up for solution by a freely elected Constituent Assembly."

#### BOLDEST LIE

Polak told American listeners, "The Viceroy's veto even now is never exercised." He concluded that "Britain will faithfully honour her pledge of independence to India" and that mistrust by Congress leaders had injured the cause of India's freedom.

#### INDEPENDENCE MEANS SLAVERY !

Lord Bertrand Russell, once a great friend of India and President of the India League in Britain, who characterised British repression as worse than Nazi tyranny assumed the role of a severe critic of Gandhiji and the Congress in the critical days of 1942, when Gandhiji and Congress leaders were thrown behind prison bars while Gandhiji was anxious to meet Lord Linlithgow and discuss terms for an honourable settlement. His sole plea in his speeches and statements was that Gandhi's programme would lead to India's enslavement by Japan.

The Earl used to be a great anti-imperialist. Once he had renounced his title in his socialistic enthusiasm but under the influence of his young wife got it back again. This marriage in old age is also said to be responsible for the somer-

sault he has undergone in his politics. He was despatched to the U. S. A. during the crisis of England, ostensibly as a lecturer in a University but the real purpose was to influence American public opinion in favour of Mother England on the question of India. He was sacked from the University for his anti-Indian campaign though openly the reason given was his lectures on companionate marriage. For some time he was hard up for expenses since due to dollar exchange difficulties he could not receive income from his estate in England. It is stated he was financially taken care of by the British propaganda authorities for a considerable period in return for his propaganda upholding Churchill's policy of refusing independence to India during the war. He negotiated for a job in the Indian Information Office in Washington, a well informed friend told me. The British Information Office however did not approve of the plan since they thought it would become too obvious. The British Embassy, however, continued to support the propagandist Earl, once the President of the India League. What a fall!

• NO INDEPENDENCE NOW

Here are some excerpts from a letter he wrote to the *Nation* :

“Dear Sirs : The Indian situation is dangerous,

and if it is to be wisely dealt with, clear thinking is very necessary. I find in some quarters a lack of clear thinking which may increase the dangers that we all wish to diminish.

“There are some points about which we are all agreed. First, the Indian difficulty must be handled in the way most likely to help in winning the war. Second, as soon as the war is over, India is to have independence—as complete, at any rate, as Great Britain or any other country will have. The only practical question at issue is : what is to be done during the continuance of the war? I feel that neither the British Government nor the Congress Party is treating this question in the way most likely to lead to victory. *Many people in America seem to feel that Gandhi must be in the right since he stands for National Independence. Others feel that loyalty to an ally makes criticism of the British Government impolitic.* Both seem to me mistaken. On the one hand, insistence on immediate independence, with all the confusion resulting from a *transfer of Government in the middle of a war, would probably end in the enslavement of both India and China to Japan.* On the other hand, the problem of India, since it is part of the problem of victory, is a problem on which all the United Nations have a right to a voice.

## HIGH DEATH RATE

"The question of India is much more complex than it appears to many American liberals. They do not know that one of the points on which the Cripps Mission broke down was the unwillingness of the Hindus to admit that Moslems have the same right to Independence from Hindus as Hindus from British. They profess to think that Sir Stafford Cripps' promises are not to be trusted. They attribute the poverty of Indians to the British, in spite of the fact that the poverty of China has always been at least as great. Mr. Louis Fischer, in "The Nation" of August 22, mentions that the infant death rate is 274 in Bombay as against 66 in London, and remarks that "such figures burn deep resentment, hatred, and disloyalty into the soul of India". The implication that the higher death rate of Bombay as compared with London is entirely the result of British misgovernment is most unfair. Bombay has a hot climate and a high birth rate; London a low birth rate and a temperate climate. I have no doubt that the British Government could have done more than it has done to reduce the high infant death rate, just as the Government of the United States could have done a great deal more than it has done to reduce the death rate among the children of Southern Negroes; but there is no reason to suppose that fewer children

would die in Bombay if British rule were to be succeeded by a government headed by Mr. Gandhi. Some years ago Mr. Gandhi stated that the earthquakes then troubling India were sent as a punishment for sin. This attitude has never been very effective against a high infant death rate. And Mr. Fischer should remember that there is every reason to think that the death rate in China, before the beginning of the war with Japan, was at least as high as in India.

“Above all, American liberals refuse to face the difficulty of establishing Indian independence overnight when every scheme hitherto suggested, whether by Indians or by the British, is vehemently rejected by a large section of Indian opinion.....”

#### ALLIED COMMISSION

*“The demand that India should be given full independence here and now is incompatible with victory, and would not be made by the Congress Party if it thought the defeat of Japan more important than immediate emancipation from England. It is this demand that creates the apparently insoluble difficulty. I believe, however, that a solution is still possible, though at some cost to British amour propre.*

“India, as an imperial possession, is lost to



England; everyone in England, including Mr. Churchill and Mr. Amery, knows this. The problem is to make the transition to self-government without holding India over to Japan. This problem concerns China and Russia just as much as it concerns England. It should be dealt with, not by England alone, but by the United Nations jointly. There should be appointed, with the consent of the British Government, a commission of four men, chosen respectively by the British, American, Soviet, and Chinese governments, with full power to negotiate with all sections of Indian opinion and to make recommendations keeping in mind two objectives; first, that the war must be won; second, that Indian independence should be granted as soon as it can be granted without hindering this first objective. If, as I believe, complete independence cannot be granted now without retarding the conduct of the war, the commission would probably find that some of the functions of government could be transferred without delay. There should be, at the earliest possible moment, interim measures to produce an armistice in the present Indian conflict and, later, considered proposals for a permanent settlement. The British government should undertake to accept the findings of the commission provided the other three governments did so. If any section of

Indian opinion rejected them it would be in effect siding with the Japanese and would have to be treated as a hostile force." Lord Russell said, "Complete National Independence, even for the strongest nation, has become an anachronism, since it can only lead to successive enslavement by predatory powers. For the same reasons a private imperialism, such as that of England in India, is equally an anachronism. But those American liberals who think that insurgent Nationalism is right while imperialist Nationalism is wrong are still living in the nineteenth century."

## ANUP SINGH ANSWERS RUSSELL

Dr. Anup Singh, Secretary of the National Committee for India's Freedom, replied to the erring Earl as follows :

"Dear Sirs : I take strong exception to much in Bertrand Russell's letter on India in "The Nation" of September 5. The letter needs to be particularly examined because coming from a distinguished thinker and a friend of India it is bound to carry much weight.

"Mr. Russell complains that the American liberals do not know that one of the points on which the Cripps mission broke down was the

unwillingness of the Hindus to admit that Moslems have the same right of independence from Hindus as the Hindus from Britain." That issue had absolutely nothing to do with Cripps' failure. Cripps failed because Britain refused to curtail the dictatorial powers of the Viceroy, and because it refused to trust Indians with the defence of their land. Cripps admitted in the House of Commons that he never once discussed the minority question with the Congress, though he discussed it with the minorities. Of course Congress objected to Cripps' plan, for it implied Pakistan, and Jinnah rejected it for its failure to guarantee Pakistan, but the negotiations finally broke down over the nature of the interim government, not over what was to come at the end of the war.

"There is nothing in common between the desire of a fraction of Moslems for independence from the Hindus and the desire of the overwhelming mass of the Indians to end an alien rule. Hindus and Moslems have religious differences that have recently been accentuated by Jinnah's intransigent attitude. Moslems, prior to the British, lived in India for centuries as rulers of the Hindus and since the British have lived as equals. They belong to the same racial stock and speak the same language as the Hindus. This Moslem talk of independence from

the Hindus started only in 1939; since Cripps; it has been made the pre-condition of any negotiations between the two groups.

“Mr. Russell further complains that American liberals ‘do not face the difficulty of a complete change of government when a Japanese invasion is imminent’. Indians never asked for a drastic change that would involve either an election in India or passage of a Bill in Parliament. They did ask for a coalition Indian government with real powers given it by convention or gentlemen’s agreement. Russell cites Ireland’s case to warn that even the grant of freedom may not fully arouse India for the war. He may be right. But without the grant of this freedom the apathy and bitterness in India will certainly play into the enemy’s hands. That is the issue.”

#### GANDHI BELIEVES IN WORK

“Russell takes Louis Fischer to task for suggesting that the disparity between the death rate in Bombay and London burns deep resentment and hatred into the soul of India, and for implying that the death rate is entirely the result of British rule. Fischer merely stated a fact in reporting the existence of this feeling among the Indians, without seeking to justify fully those feelings. The grinding poverty in

India is largely responsible for the high death rate, and certainly there is connection between poverty and the government of the day in India. It is quite possible, as Russell suggests, that the death rate in Bombay, with a hot climate, will always be higher than in London, but it need not remain so appallingly high.

“Again, Russell may be right in saying that there is no reason to suppose that fewer children would die in Bombay under a government headed by a man like Gandhi, who said that earthquake shocks in India were punishment for sin. Yet this attitude of Gandhi’s has never prevented him from actively striving to improve the lot of the Indian masses. Gandhi looks upon British rule, too, as punishment for Indian sins, but he doesn’t sit idly by. He also believes that India is paying for its sins against the untouchables, but he does not leave the matter there; he is exhorting the upper classes to abolish this iniquitous system. In fact, in his opposition to British rule Gandhi is moved largely by the conviction that India’s social and economic regeneration is no longer possible under the British.

#### WHY NO INDIAN?

“Finally, I take exception to the composition of the commission! Russell proposes for the settle-

ment of the Indian question. He suggests an American, British, Chinese, and Russian member. If a British, why not an Indian? Why should one party in the dispute and not the other be allowed to sit in judgment on its own deeds? Let both parties, Britain and India, give a prior commitment to abide by the decision of an international tribunal. Indian nationalism is neither jingoistic nor exclusive; it is international in its outlook. When Indians talk of independence, they mean the absolute end of British domination, and not freedom from legitimate international obligations and responsibilities as Russell seems to imply.

While Russell is perturbed over the lack of clear thinking about India among American liberals, I am perturbed over the present attitude of the English liberals towards India. I wonder if Russell, too, is going the way of Cripps, Norman Angell, and others!"—Signed Anup Singh.

*New York, September, 10.*

#### RUSSELL SUPPORTS PAKISTAN

To the hundreds of admirers of Earl Bertrand Russell it would be a shock to know that in his old age the Earl, who always believed in world unity and a World Federation, has been supporting the division of India during his lecture tours in the United States.

At a debate with Dr. Anup Singh, the Earl declared that Muslims had a right to demand Pakistan and this was the only solution of India's problems, since the two communities could not live together.

Dr. Anup Singh retorted "May be it was not a sanctified wedding but it was at least a workable companionate marriage. Now you insist on divorce." The audience roared with laughter and the Earl felt embarrassed because he was very unpopular in the U. S. A. for preaching his theory of companionate marriage, which cost him his lectureship in a University which did not like his ultra-modern views.

#### A GENTLEMAN'S PACT

The Earl met Anup Singh the same night on the train as a fellow passenger and told him "Please never crack that joke about companionate marriage in public, since you know how Americans feel about my theory."

Anup Singh replied, "O. K., if you don't talk of Pakistan any more."

The Earl said, "It is a gentleman's pact."

#### "GANDHI HELPING ENSLAVEMENT"

In a letter to the "New York Times," Russell charged Mahatma Gandhi of helping Japanese

conquest and India's enslavement." Here are some excerpts from the letter :

"As a past president of the India League in England and a supporter for many years of the movement for Indian self-government, I feel that I should make clear my strong opposition to the present policy of Mr. Gandhi.

"I ardently desire freedom for India, and I consider that Mr. Gandhi's policy is likely to assist Indian's enslavement. I hope that the British Government will grant India complete independence, and not merely dominion status, when the war ends, and I should favour the immediate granting of such civil independence as is compatible with the military necessities of India and all the other threatened nations.

"Complete independence is not possible among nations involved in modern war.

"Mr. Gandhi's movement is calculated to hinder the Victory of the United Nations and to assist Japanese conquest not only of India but also of China. Whoever supports this movement is no friend of either India or China."

Now the Earl is staging another somersault, but India will not be fooled again. We prefer honest enemies to treacherous friends. I honour Churchill more than any bogus friends of India like Polak and Bertrand Russell or a bogus socialist like Sir Stafford Cripps.